

# Retired Firefighter Honored as a Quiet Leader

By ADAM SWIFT

Harvey Cushing, who retired last week after almost 48 years with the fire department, isn't a man who relishes the limelight.

"We had a hard time trying to get him in here for a retirement party," said Fire Chief Kevin Nord. "He doesn't like a lot of publicity."

Cushing began as call firefighter in December of 1959 and was appointed a fulltime firefighter in 1973.

Deputy Fire Chief Christopher West worked with Cushing for the past 20 years.

"Harvey was my first partner when I got on the department," said West. "He was a quiet guy who did his job and did it well. He was very dependable, but he didn't really have a lot to say."

Even finding a photo of Cushing for the department's web site was a bit of a task.

"There's not a lot of film on Harvey," West said. Eventually, West said, he did find one photo of Cushing fighting a fire on Gurnet Road about 15 years ago.

While Cushing might not have been the most vocal firefighter in the department, there was no denying that he was one of the hardest workers.

"If you needed someone to work overtime, you could always call Harvey," West said.

The regular shifts and overtime at the fire department didn't even take into account the maintenance work Cushing did at the police station.

Cushing's daughter Helen Daniel remembers all the sacrifices her father made and the hours he put into both jobs in order to put Daniel, her sister Mary, and her brother Mark through school.

"I remember my dad work-



**Firefighter Harvey Cushing retired last week after serving the town for 48 years.**

ing at the police station, coming home to shower and then leaving for the fire station," Daniel said. "There were weeks when I saw him for a total of three hours."

Cushing grew up on Standish Street in Hall's Corner, and met his wife, also named Helen, while she was working as a waitress at the Milepost Tavern, Daniel said. Until he became a fulltime firefighter in 1973, Cushing worked with his father, Levi Cushing, at the family garage in Hall's Corner.

"Over the course of his career, he has served under five chiefs, became one of the first EMTs in 1974, and has seen many changes in the fire service," Nord said.

Both Nord and West praised Cushing for his mechanical knowledge.

"When we purchased a new ladder truck, he did a lot of

work behind the scenes to make sure we got the best truck," West said.

"He was good with mechanics and was interested in apparatus, especially the brush trucks," West said. "He was a big woods fire guy."

Cushing was also a great resource for the younger firefighters in the department, West said.

"You need those guys who might not say a lot but who lead by example," he said.

For Daniel, her father was a leader and a hero, both to her and to the community at large.

"Usually, firefighters aren't recognized as heroes unless they die in the line of duty," she said. "Thankfully, that never happened to my dad, but the truth is, that's what firefighters are willing to do for people they don't even know. It really takes a truly selfless human being to do that day after day."

Daniel remembers her father as someone who worked hard and provided for his family, helping put all three children through college.

"It's amazing the sacrifices my parents made," Daniel said. "There were no family vacations or new cars, or anything for that matter. I think they have the same color TV I grew up with."

For family and coworkers, the big question now is what a workaholic like Cushing will do with his retirement.

"Maybe now, he's just going to rest," said Daniel. "I don't know. I don't think he probably knows what he's going to do, to be honest. I think, if the town let him, he would still continue to work."

West said he still expects to see Cushing around the fire station.

"I'm sure that once brush fire season starts, he'll be popping his head in the door," he said.